

**Teaching Dance Concepts:
Moving Toward an Inclusive and Innovative Future**

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Introduction

Dance has the ability to shape minds, bodies, and communities. It is a tool for understanding cultures, for instilling healthy physical practices, and for promoting self-confidence. Dance education can ignite a desire for lifelong learning, expand students' imagination and creativity, and prepare them for the increasingly innovative and changing landscape of the modern world. Through concept-based dance, also known as creative movement, students learn by exploring their own movement vocabulary through a guided practice. Teachers describe the concepts of space, time, body, effort, movement, and form and students learn through their own interpretations of dance. In this paper, I will demonstrate how concept-based dance education trains students in creativity, which increases their abilities to successfully adapt in an economy that highly rewards innovation.

Background: Young Dance

This paper began with a consulting project for Young Dance—a Minneapolis-based dance education organization whose mission is to “transform lives through movement” (www.youngdance.org). Young Dance is unique in that they approach dance education from a conceptual framework, rather than teach traditional techniques like ballet, jazz, or tap. This means that the benefits of dance generally considered secondary to training, like self-awareness, spatial awareness, confidence, collaboration, problem-solving, etc., are taught as the primary objective. Rather than being an indirect benefit of learning steps and dances, they become direct outcomes of exploring the concepts of space, time, body, effort, movement, and form in a way that “combines the mastery of movement with the artistry of expression” (Gilbert 3).

The objective of this project was for Young Dance to increase their rate of attraction and retention, but they found it difficult to convey the value of concept-based education due to its

intangible nature. To address this challenge, I developed materials that would help them articulate the value of dance education, specifically concept-based dance that focuses less on steps and more on the ideas that generate movement. The leadership of Young Dance believed that this approach to dance education is accessible to students of all backgrounds and abilities.

As an innate form of expression, dance education is an accessible entry point to exploring creativity. Creative movement is free from cultural connotations and preconceived notions of what is dance or what a dancer looks like. It focuses not on training students to be dancers or artists, but rather it is about teaching students to *think* like artists (Foley).

Thinking Like an Artist

Writers, scholars, economists, and more are increasingly articulating the value of thinking like an artist. Experiential learning can be a tool for achieving this characteristic in students. Experiential learning in creative movement means that, “less is more; the teacher provides opportunities for experience and lets the body find its own way and make its own sense of what happens” (Gray 59). Teachers describe the concepts and the students learn through their own free form dance.

In a lesson on size, a teacher can take time to articulate what is size and how it manifests in the body. However, the actual steps are not codified and mimicked, they are explored through improvisation. This method eliminates notions of right or wrong and directly addresses what dance has been known to indirectly achieve: self-awareness, self-expression, spatial awareness, and problem-solving, to name a few (Brinson 162).

The theories and information discussed in this paper will augment the argument for integrating dance into education. There is a clear and outlined need for fostering creativity in students, with social and economic impacts (Catterall, et al. 8). Teaching dance from a

conceptual framework develops creativity. In addition to training students in creativity, I will demonstrate how dance and arts education will lead to more inclusivity and provide opportunities for students in underserved communities. Integrating dance and art education into schools is crucial to develop the creativity and critical thinking skills of students, and the timing is dire.

First, I will elaborate on what is concept-based dance education/creative movement. I will examine how integrating dance and art into education cultivates creativity and prepares students for a changing economy. I will also demonstrate how the current standards of education, which heavily favor math and science, do a disservice in preparing students for the future and how fostering creativity, innovation, and collaboration are important and accessible through dance education.

Arts and Equity in the Conceptual Age

Applying Broad Concepts

Concept-based dance education, values a different set of outcomes than traditional techniques like ballet, jazz, or tap. Rather than teaching steps, creative movement promotes concepts and guides a student through her or his own exploration of movement. These broad concepts are space, time, body, effort, movement, and form. Teaching dance in this way initiates movement “from young people’s own dance and dance ideas, not from those of adults” (Brinson 187). This entry point to dance eliminates concepts of “right or wrong” and allows students to trust in their own ideas. This initial trust in themselves and the action of connecting guidelines to original ideas sets the stage for ideation and creativity.

As an initiation for studying dance, ballet, for example, may not necessarily be accessible because the purpose of its “training is to acquire the physical attributes of the aristocracy of

beauty” (Gray 58), so there is inherent barrier in the practice. This preconceived notion of who can dance alienates students of different body types, abilities, race, and socio-economic status. Concept-based dance, however, channels a child’s organic movement instincts. In her book *Dance Instruction: Science Applied to the Art of Movement*, Judith Gray refers to concept-based creative movement as teaching dance from a “body as child” metaphor and explains its value as such:

Instruction based on the body-as-child metaphor is useful in dance education that strives to induce creativity, variability of response, and coordination. Unlike others, this metaphor approaches the body respectfully, but not restrictively. Consequently, students learn to listen to their own kinesthetic stirrings and to value them as a source of knowledge. This facilitates experiencing the self as an organic whole engaged in a constantly evolving dialect. (59-60)

It is necessary to integrate dance concepts into education in order to equip students with the tools necessary to succeed. Creative movement brings to the forefront what are generally considered to be peripheral benefits of dance education. These skills and characteristics that dance fosters are:

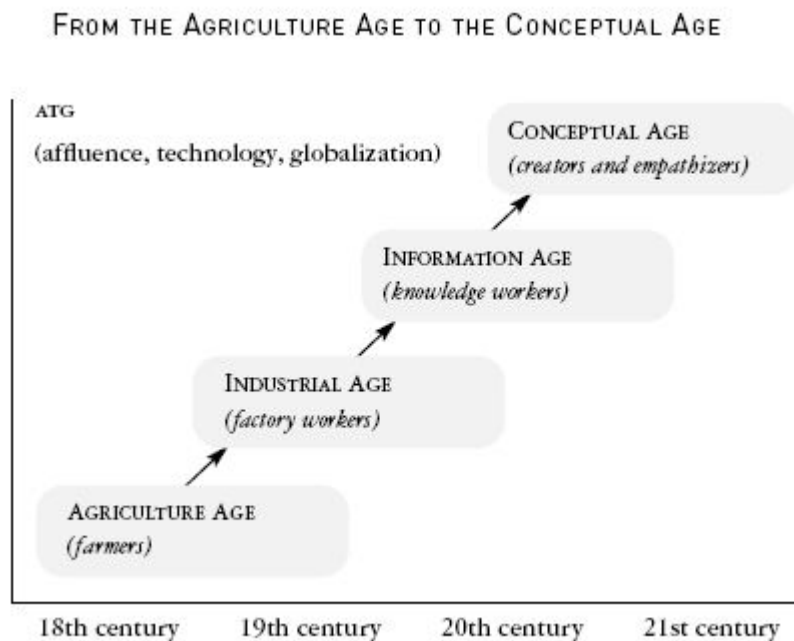
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| ● Self-expression | ● Self-esteem |
| ● Perception | ● Self-awareness |
| ● Critical-thinking | ● Coordination, mobility, strength, stamina |
| ● Artistic and aesthetic appreciation | ● Self-respect |
| ● Empathy | ● Discipline and self-control |
| ● The ability to identify relationships between feelings, values, and expression | ● A general interest in physical activity |
| | ● Communication skills |

- Self-confidence
 - Independence
 - Initiative
 - Collaboration
 - Alternative and non-linear problem-solving skills
 - Passion for lifelong learning
- (Brinson 161-162; Gray 13-15; Gilbert 6-7)

Together these skills develop creativity. A combination of these traits can prepare students for a global economy in which creativity and innovation are valued.

Creative Movement for the Conceptual Age

In his book, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future*, Daniel Pink argues that as the economy is increasingly globalized, the need for fostering creativity is gaining importance. Pink argues that we are moving away from the Information Age, where “information and knowledge fueled the economy,” toward the Conceptual Age, where “the creator and the empathizer” will be the key players (48).



Above is a representation from *A Whole New Mind*, outlining the progression from farming to ideation as the dominant marketable good of the United States.

Pink attributes Abundance, Asia, and Automation (29) to this shift in the economy. Abundance refers to a market that is saturated with options (32); Asia deals with outsourcing, primarily to China and India (36). Automation describes the phenomenon of machines and computers taking over many jobs, or portions of jobs (44).

The loss of jobs in the information and knowledge sector is making way for the new age: the Conceptual Age (Pink 48). While shifting to a new economic age means that some jobs will continue to be lost, it also means that new skills will be valued as we move forward.

When economies and societies depended on factories and mass production, R-Directed Thinking was mostly irrelevant. Then as we moved to knowledge-work, R-Directed Thinking came to be recognized as legitimate, though still secondary, to the preferred mode of L-Directed Thinking. Now, as North America, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan evolve once again, R-Directed Thinking is beginning to achieve social and economic parity—and, in many cases, primacy. In the twenty-first century, it has become the first among equals, the key to professional achievement and personal satisfaction. (Pink 50)

The shift toward R-Directed Thinking, or right brained skills like creativity, intuition, and aesthetic means that those traits must be taught and cultivated. To develop the right brain, arts education, and specifically dance, needs to find a new place in education.

...American education needs to cultivate talents and skills that cannot be done cheaper overseas. To do so requires American education to capitalize on its traditional strengths in local autonomy, flexibility, and an emphasis on educating all children instead of moving toward more standards, narrowing the curriculum, and reducing the definition of education to standardized test scores. (Zhao 426)

While jobs are outsourced and reduced to machines, American students need to cultivate those skills that cannot be replaced: creativity, innovation, imagination, and empathy. Dance education develops those and should therefore be an integral part of curriculum, similar to math or science. As Pink's title suggests, this new emphasis on the right-brain skills will lead to whole-brain thinking. The skills that we acquire in science and technology will be complemented by creativity. As Gray stated earlier, creative movement teaches students to think as an "organic whole" (60).

Experiential Learning for Innovation

Pink's description of the value of developing right brain skills goes beyond the professional need for creativity—to that of personal satisfaction. In his essay, "Buy Experiences, Not Things," James Hamblin makes a case for the importance of seeking happiness through experiences rather than objects. He states that, "happiness is in the content of moment-to-moment experiences. Nothing material is intrinsically valuable, except in whatever promise of happiness it carries." Personal satisfaction can be found in meaningful experiences, and creative movement can lay the groundwork for creating experience-oriented individuals.

Dance cultivates an interest in activity (Brinson 162) and it teaches people to *experience*. Dance teaches us to be in the moment. In a dance class, or in rehearsal, there is a practice happening in real time. Problem solving, exploration, and inquisitiveness happen while the body is moving and learning. At the end, there is visible and invisible progress. We can see a dance that has been constructed, while the intangible effects linger on in the body and the memory.

This in-the-moment experience cannot be replicated exactly ever again, and students develop skills to consider, analyze, and understand it as an experience.

Hamblin continues that, “it’s the fleetingness of experiential purchases that endears us to them.” Dance’s unique quality is in its fleetingness. Time is an inseparable aspect of the live performance, as well as in dance training. Whether the experience is good, bad, or mediocre, it is recalled, analyzed, and evaluated, but it can never be the same twice. Dance is training in having experiences. It enables people to think critically about their experiences, as well as the experiences of others, such as peers and audiences, which shape their future experiences.

Experiences are also valuable beyond personal satisfaction, in that they contribute to professional innovation. Psychologist Carl Rogers links experience to creativity, explaining that: “It has been found that when the individual is ‘open’ to all his experience then his behavior will be creative, and his creativity may be trusted to be essentially constructive” (quoted in Brinson 136). This retrospective notion on experience demonstrates that they are opportunities to expand knowledge further, knowledge which can then be applied in new settings. Therefore, dance education instills an appreciation for experience, and experiences are essential for lifelong learning.

In *Strategic Intuition: The Creative Spark in Human Achievement*, William Duggan describes links between experiences and lifelong learning influence innovation. He describes how during pivotal times in the past, leaders and innovators have utilized their existing knowledge to forge new paths. They do this not by pulling new ideas out of thin air, but by

connecting the dots between what they know and where they need to go, and by applying existing knowledge from different sectors to new challenges, in new ways.

Experiences add to our understanding of the world, and are a form of continuing education. The knowledge gained from experiences—whether visiting new cultures, taking physical risks, or taking time to rest away from a challenge at work—provides people with added ammunition to face challenges when they're ready to be addressed again. Ideas, innovation, and creativity happen when we can intuitively connect pieces of our existing knowledge and then “a selective combination of elements from the past makes something new. The elements themselves are not new” (Duggan 16).

Creative movement, through cross-curricular learning, teaches students to apply one form of knowledge to another. For example, using physical and active learning in math. This basic exercise lays the groundwork for making deeper and more complicated connections consciously or intuitively.

Creative movement and dance education prepares students for intuitive ideation by cultivating perception, critical-thinking, lifelong learning, and everything else in the list above, plus more. ““The arts are not only for communicating ideas. They are ways of having ideas, of creating ideas, or exploring experience in particular ways and fashioning our understanding of it into new forms”” (Gulbenkian quoted by Brinson 76). These characteristics become the impetus behind a person's interest in seeking out experiences, but they also contribute to how a person understands and remembers their experiences, and then how those experiences are intuitively applied to other challenges, problems, and puzzles.

Creative Movement and the Senses

Dance education can more explicitly prepare students for the Conceptual Age than by cultivating an interest in experiential learning. Pink elaborates that the Conceptual Age will require six “senses” to thrive, and they are Design, Story, Symphony, Empathy, Play, and Meaning. *Design* means that in order for a product to be competitive, it must be “emotionally engaging.” For an argument to be captivating it must also have a strong narrative; a fact rooted in a *Story*. *Symphony* happens when we synthesize our knowledge, “seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces to a compelling new whole.” In order to connect with consumers, co-workers, and others, we must have *Empathy*. And as discussed above, a part of the Conceptual Age is not only professional success, but also personal fulfillment, and to achieve that, people must *Play* (65).

These six senses are necessary to thrive in the twenty-first century and dance education can teach them. In a dance class, students design dances, engaging themselves and each other in movement exploration. Creative movement promotes *Design* skills because it “gives opportunities to explore the relationship between feelings, values, and expression” and “uses problem solving through alternative and nonlinear methods of thought and action” (Brinson 162). This helps students think beyond the function of a product and consider how it would make someone feel or how different people in different communities would use an item.

Together, students develop a dance or phrase, in narrative and non-narrative forms. Dance “gives access to a unique expression of meaning” and “develops communication skills through movement and visual images” (Brinson 161-162). This is the *Story*, as Pink calls it, behind an idea. Creative movement provides a space to develop expression and

communication—verbal, physical, and visual—and these in turn can help a person express her or his idea better to an employer, colleague, or consumer.

Students of any age use whatever knowledge they have to explore a concept, pulling in information from a variety of subjects and channel them through their movements. Their *Symphony* of ideas is learned through “cross-curricular projects” (Brinson 162) and “transdisciplinary research” (Foley). With all that dance teachers, it provides students with a broader knowledge base that they can then intuitively draw from at any point in their lives.

Students work individually and collaboratively, negotiating the space around them, to express an idea and feeling; they build relationships and *Empathy* as they learn about each other’s abilities, motivations, and strengths. Dance builds an “understanding of the different cultural values attached to dance... [it] promotes sensitivity in working with others... and [it] encourages collaborative teaching and learning strategies” (Brinson 162). This collaboration builds empathy as dancers work together toward a goal. They must take themselves and their movement into consideration, as well as the movement and roles of others, in order to collectively create something.

They do all this through *Playful* investigations of movement. In the aforementioned ways, students connect with peers and educators, they explore meaning in movement, and they learn in a non-traditional fashion—all while having fun, building relationships, and experiencing their ideas in action. Students find fulfillment in exploring and learning without a judgment of right or wrong and better or worse.

Creative movement develops the right brain’s capacity for creativity, intuition, and empathy. These traits are learned, just as math, science, reading, and writing, are learned, and they are developed and refined. Creativity is an acquired skill and can be taught. Detrimental to

the arts and arts education, there is an incorrect assumption that artistry and creativity is an innate gift of mysterious origins (Deresiewicz).

The solution to preparing students for the Conceptual age is not just broadly arts education, but it is a combination of arts education that includes dance education—harnessing its intellectual, aesthetic, and physical benefits. While this paper adds to a vast collection of scholars calling for immediate and deep integration of arts education, integration dance and art into K-12 education meets a lot of resistance.

Education and a Fear of Ambiguity

“...Over the past four decades, budget pressures and an increasing focus on just reading and math have crowded the arts out of too many school days” (Landesman quoted in Catterall, et al. 5). The arts have become an after thought in the left-brain dominated educational system. In this section, I will explore the aversion toward arts education and developing creativity through three barriers: (1) that creativity and artistry are innate personality traits; (2) that lessons on creativity promote eccentricity and can cause disruptive behavior in classroom environments; and (3) that it is difficult to measure creativity in a standardized test and therefore is a low priority.

To address the first challenge—the mysterious nature of creativity—we must “bring definitional clarity to the concept of creativity, moving it from the realm of mystery, serendipity and individual genius to a definitional field that is more amenable to analysis” (McWilliam and Haukka 651). As dance education scholars have been working to definitively articulate the benefits of dance education, so have education and economic scholars worked to define creativity. Giving creativity definitive qualities will help make it more “teachable.” As

understanding creativity becomes commonplace, it will become less ambiguous, and educators will fear them less (Foley).

Creativity and creative people have several consistent and definitive traits, all of which can be cultivated through dance education. According to Cindy Foley, these include: comfort with ambiguity, idea generation, and transdisciplinary research. Creative movement is grounded in multiple outcomes. In a dance lesson, an idea can physically manifest in as many ways as there are people in the room. None of these ideas are wrong or right. They are subjective and students perceive, analyze, and understand them in just as many ways, without coming to a single “answer” or conclusion.

This format develops a comfort with ambiguity because it translates to being given a problem or challenge and knowing that there is more than one solution and that the outcome is uncertain. Lessons in ambiguity in and of themselves prepare students for the ambiguity of the future and “education is a future-oriented business because it aims to prepare today’s children for the future” (Zhao 422). As educators develop a better understanding of creativity, combined with their own comfort with ambiguity, then creativity and dance education will be more readily integrated into curriculum.

Ambiguity is a necessary part of preparing students for personal and professional decision-making, problem solving, and experiencing. Creative movement utilizes broad concepts to make in-the-moment decisions, but it also teaches students that those decisions are flexible, can be changed, and that obstacles and barriers are not to be feared, but confronted.

In this framework, dance education also teaches ideation, or idea generation, another definitive trait of creative people outlined by Foley. A single instruction or problem can be addressed in many different ways. As movement ideas happen, perceptive and critical thinking

skills focuses students on the idea with which they most resonate. Transdisciplinary research, Foley's third definition for creativity, is also learned through creative movement. In an exercise, students apply their existing knowledge in new ways. A lesson on space can be used in a cross-curricular lesson on history. Whether learning about invasions and war, economic growth, these ideas can be explored through moving space—in relation to students own space, on a vertical or horizontal plane, and through exploring personal space and group space.

As Duggan discusses, acquiring broad knowledge like this can be applied from subject to subject intuitively. In addition, dance promotes lifelong learning, in all subjects, and that knowledge can then be applied to cross-sector problems. This is just one scholar's understanding of creativity. By defining creativity in concrete terms, it becomes less nebulous and more attainable and teachable.

Support for demystifying creativity comes from social and organizational analysts, who show that the sort of creativity that leads to innovative organizational practice is more likely to be an outcome of adaptation—new recombinations of what currently exists (see Leadbeater, 1999; Lessig, 2005)—than of 'flash-of-inspiration' moments or the radical invention of something out of nothing.” (McWilliam and Haukka 653)

Erica McWilliam and Sandra Haukka describe creativity as consisting “of three components—domain-relevant skills, creative processes, and intrinsic task motivation—all of which can be fostered through formal and informal learning” (652). Creative movement develops skills, is process-oriented, and teaches on self-motivation. Through learning, students develop skills, but they also develop the knowledge of how to learn, and successful education promotes a continued desire to learn. When a student displays an interest in a specific field, they need not

know everything about that field already, but they do need to have an understanding of *how* to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed.

“People learn most effectively by doing. Fortunately, in dance all learning is manifested by actions even when it is stimulated or initiated by words, images, sounds, or textures. Dance can be considered the complete learning process...” (Gray 69). The *how* of learning is the process, and dance is process-driven because it is rooted in action. Process learning and motivation are learned through dance because it is learning by doing.

The second barrier that arts and dance education faces is that of educator’s aversion to a classroom that may promote misbehaving. “Over the last two decades, research has found that K-12 teachers tend to devalue creativity in students, to some extent because creativity is associated with nonconformity, impulsivity, and classroom disruptions” (Daniels 3). This unfortunate correlation does a disservice to students in preparing them for the future, and it alienates many students from fully engaging in the classroom.

Dance fosters creativity, but it also engages students through multiple learning styles. Students may be acting out already, when they are expected to learn through lectures, but incorporating different learning methods fully captures the attention of some students and offers them a creative outlet in which to express themselves. “...Diverse learners have diverse learning needs, that choice is a key motivator, and that both consistency and novelty are important for engaging students in their own learning and in maintaining that engagement over time” (Daniels 4). Because dance education/creative movement is intended to be open-ended, and because of its physical nature, students may be less likely to “act out.”

As long as creativity, artistry, intuition, and empathy are considered innate personality traits rather than learned skills, it will be difficult to integrate the arts and dance into education. It will also be a challenge to shift the culture of education towards being comfortable with ambiguity and recognizing different learning styles. In addition, educators and institutions cling to conformity because of the culture of standardized testing—my third point—and bureaucratic incentives that tie their performance measures to student outcomes.

...Where error results in painful condemnation from external others who are marking, grading, and measuring each move, then it is more likely that a student will avoid uncertainty at all costs, rather than embrace it for what it might conceivably offer to fresh understanding and to the strategic search for meaning. Put bluntly, ramping up performance measures around teaching and learning is not likely to grow a creative workforce—indeed; it may have a contrary effect. (McWilliam and Haukka 661)

It is difficult to measure, quantify, and test creativity, and, unfortunately, under current standards, we function under a “what is tested is what is taught” (Pacheco) model. This model offers students inadequate preparation for the present and the future. When emphasis is placed on the outcome of a test, educators and students are preoccupied with memorizing and applying linear problem solving techniques, with the goal being to perform well on a test, rather than learning and being prepared for the future. In creative movement, emphasis is placed on the act of learning, not the outcome and quantitative impact of what is learned.

This is similarly true in a traditional dance education setting, where more time is spent preparing for the recital or performance than is spent on learning the concepts of dance and understanding and experiencing them deeply (Gilbert 53). With concepts as the focus, however,

more time is spent devoted to exploring, analyzing, and alternative and non-linear problem solving. This approach can be the antidote to fear of creativity and outcome-oriented learning.

Measuring Impact

As of 2013, the United States was testing below average internationally in math, science, and reading (Ryan). In addition to tested poorly, American students from low socio-economic backgrounds tested below average in what is known as “student resilience” rate, meaning that there was a measurable educational disparity linked to poverty (Ryan). As stress factors increase in school settings, among teachers and students alike, and the landscape of technology and innovation evolves, dance can serve as a means of exploring new learning models, of relieving stress, and of fostering creativity and innovation. In continuing the effort to integrate dance, and all the arts, into curricula and culture, it is important to continue to demonstrate their need and value.

While creativity may be hard to test, integrating arts education has real and measurable results in education. In 2012 the National Endowment for the Arts published a report that found direct correlations between arts participation and achievement in students of low socio-economic status. The NEA report found that students from low socio-economic backgrounds that actively participated in the arts:

- (1) Scored higher in science and reading
- (2) Were more likely complete a calculus course
- (3) Had higher overall GPAs (this was also found among high socio-economic status students)
- (4) Had a lower dropout rate
- (5) Were more likely to aspire to college

(6) Were more likely to enroll in competitive, 4-year colleges

(7) Were more likely finish college while earning mostly As

(Catterall, et al. 12-16)

These correlations support how the arts promote more than just creating artists. Through experience and expanding the mind, students become more engaged in other areas and most importantly, they engage in lifelong learning. Brinson's idea of "cross-curricular learning" (162), in this setting, is not just limited to learning about subjects in alternative forms, but it is also applying how a student learns to multiple sections. Not all students are engaged through reading and lectures, so to engage them in an alternative fashion can impact their engagement in other areas as well. This does not mean that a student will learn through dance in every subject, but rather, through sating a desire to learn about the arts, they are better focused participating in other subjects. Learning by *doing*, as is done in dance, can unlock a general interest in learning that may otherwise go unexplored.

Integrating dance education will require a cultural change, but the benefits outweigh the challenges.

... Educators have both the opportunity and the challenge of shifting their attention from content delivery to capacity building, from supplying curriculum to co-creating curriculum, from supplying education to navigating learning networks. In so doing, they will help young people to shift their attention from their own individual performance to their capacity to learn through their own networks—to connect, access information and forge relationships in and through dynamic and productive teams. (McWilliam and Haukka 663)

Dance and arts education provide students with more ways of acquiring, analyzing, and applying knowledge. In addressing the three aforementioned hindrances to developing creativity in schools, educators, students, and families must move forward to change the culture of education and address how standardized testing and pro-conformist attitudes inhibit learning for many students. To provide students with the opportunities needed to thrive in the Conceptual Age, we have “an obligation to explore the means by which we may anchor creativity in the mission of our educational institutions” (Livingston 59).

Educating for Inclusion

Not only does the information provided by the NEA demonstrate the value that the arts add to education, it demonstrates another powerful necessity for an innovative future: diversity and inclusion. Catterall’s research follows students of low socio-economic status, an already disenfranchised and marginalized community. By affording them their basic rights to a good education, the future of creativity and innovation is positively impacted.

People of all different religions, cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, family dynamics, race, abilities, and more bring with them unique perspectives with which they approach learning and problem solving. As Catterall’s findings suggest, more arts in education equals more diversity in all sectors. Concept-based creative movement is, in itself, an accessible form of arts education. It is about broad ideas and does not favor one cultural practice over another.

Dance practice involves mastering one’s body and developing its capacities for communication and movement, using its particular characteristics. Thus dance in education is for everyone, not just for those with particular physiques or talent.

Mastery of the body and its use for expressive purposes develops self-confidence with great psychological benefits. (Brinson 74)

Without a “right or wrong” or a cultural or aesthetic dominance, concept-based creative movement prioritizes the act of learning itself, for all. Creative movement deemphasizes positions, shapes, idealized aesthetics, and mimicking and reinforces that bodies of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, and abilities, can explore dance, without modification.

Inclusion is an important aspect of innovation, because the more diversity in a room, the better we can find a solution to a problem. “New ideas are generated most efficiently in places where different cognitive styles are tolerated—and different cognitive styles are linked to demographic diversity...” (Florida 232). Diversity means that new ideas, ways of thinking, backgrounds, and cultures will inform the future of dance, and that is the only way it can maintain its relevance moving forward. The NEA report supports the argument that providing equal education is not dependent on strict implementation of tested subjects in schools, but rather through integrating the arts in underserved communities.

Conclusion

Dance has long been a means of storytelling, expressing human experience through movement. It inherently forces audiences to question ideas of perception and provides a snapshot of the time in which any given piece is created. In addition to expanding the knowledge of audiences, dance offers a deep source from which students of any age, ability, or means can channel their own creativity. Dance education caters to multiple learning styles—through listening, watching, and experiencing, and thus prepares student for the Conceptual Age in which they will work.

Through real-time learning in creation, with and without parameters, dance provides opportunities for learning skills that are essential for the future. The value of arts education is future innovation inside and outside the arts sector. As businesses are becoming increasingly interested finding new and unconventional models, they seek employees that are willing to take risks and apply new modes of problem solving (Pacheco).

Creativity is a necessity moving forward, and “creativity is inevitable, because every aspect of our lives depends on it—our well-being and our aesthetic experiences, technological advances and discoveries, and fulfillment of societal and individual goals” (Grohman and Szmidt 15). Therefore it is paramount to overcome the cultural reluctance towards integrating dance education and arts education, in order to foster creativity. There is a clear need for creativity, with quantitative correlations linking arts education to academic success.

Dance education relies on active participation. This active nature of students engaged in arts transfers to all facets of their lives. Dance especially is training in *doing*. Concept-based dance education emphasizes process, not outcome. It is in the *process* of learning that creativity flourishes. Whether taught by itself, or applied to other subjects, it engages students in new ways of thinking, understanding, and expressing.

Dance education develops reasoning and problem-solving skills, and teaches them to immerse their bodies and minds into a process of learning, a process that can be applied to all subjects and in higher education. Creative movement engages students in understanding how seemingly disconnected knowledge can be connected to forge new ideas, new models, new ways

of seeing, and new ways of collaborating, and these attributes are vital to creativity and innovation.

“For our children to live successfully and peacefully in this globalized world, we need to help them develop the appropriate skills, knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives” (Zhao 429).

While there is no test now to measure the benefits of concept-based dance education, there is an abundance of language and analysis that can help us understand it. The skills it nurtures and develops in students—creativity, innovation, collaboration, communication, and more—are key to their success in the twenty-first century.

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